



Alternative Livelihoods Update

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Alternative Livelihoods Program (ALP) Making Progress in Afghanistan:

- Rapid deployment of cash for work program **generated 4.4 million work days of paid labor and resulted in more than \$15 million in wages paid to 193,978 farmers.**
- Over **236 km of roads and 6,200 km of irrigation canals** have been rehabilitated affecting **290,000 hectares** of land.
- USAID improved **1,012 km of canals in the south resulting in better irrigation to 42,620 hectares of land in the southern region.** Improved irrigation is critical to produce high-value agriculture, such as grape production in the south. Poppy production can be sustained without irrigation.
- USAID funding helped **550,000 farmers in all 34 provinces receive seed and fertilizer** to plant crops. This is the country's first national distribution program of this size. Along with the distribution of 14,000 metric tons of winter wheat and vegetable seed and 40,000 metric tons of fertilizer, anti-poppy pamphlets were included.
- Afghanistan's **national seed and fertilizer distribution program reached 386 of the nation's 397 districts** in time for the fall planting season. This counter-narcotics effort **successfully reached 97% of its target beneficiaries.**
- USAID **launched an orchard development program in the eastern provinces** of Nangarhar and Laghman. The project encompasses 3,000 hectares of commercial orchards affecting 5,000 farmers. In November 2005, trainings were held for 2,800 farmers.
- Over **3,750 women in 13 districts benefited from household income generating activities** in Nangarhar province. Projects focus on handicrafts, embroidery, tailoring, small-scale agricultural processing and training to develop agricultural skills.



PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

Digging ditches in Helmand Province fulfills an immediate need for income generation and infrastructure development.

LICIT ECONOMY GROWING IN HELMAND

Volatile Helmand Province, once home of the Taliban and center of conservative culture, is among the most prolific of poppy growing provinces in the country. Its fertile land and proximity to the Ring Road and Pakistan make poppy growing and smuggling common, but also suggests great potential for licit economic development through agribusiness and its associated industries.

USAID is assisting the Government of Afghanistan to accelerate broad-based, rural economic development and expand sustainable livelihood options to boost the licit economy. USAID strengthens the active participation of the private sector, community organizations and government in the promotion and growth of viable, licit employment opportunities - alternatives to poppy-growing.

Agribusiness and agro-processing will serve as the nucleus of the Alternative Livelihoods Southern Region Project. The agribusiness department will seek investment opportunities, identify potential investors, assist in the preparation of investment plans, and work closely with investors to mitigate pitfalls which could hinder the sustainability of their firms. At the district and farm level, agriculture extension agents will provide similar services to ensure that the farmers meet quality and quantity standards to comply with their agreements with the agro-processors.

A heavy security presence, a new governor pressing for accountability, and increasing support for USAID development efforts are helping the majority of citizens who desire progress. Opportunities for licit economic development have arrived and will soon be increased.



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PEKHA VILLAGE REDUCES POPPY CULTIVATION IN ACHIN, NANGARHAR



PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

The elders of western Achin district in Nangarhar Province expressed interest in income generation projects to build infrastructure, especially flood protection walls. Most farmers were ready to give up poppy production, even though a few had already planted. The area grew poppy from 2004 to 2005.

Pekha Village is in western Achin District, a mountainous area on the edge of the Spinghar Mountains in Nangarhar Province. Agricultural land is limited, and income is low. The spring thaw sends torrents of water through the area, destroying crops and homes.



PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

A successful alternative livelihoods' cash for work program contributed to a dramatic reduction in poppy cultivation recently in western Achin District of Nangarhar Province. Strong provincial leadership and the destruction of heroin laboratories were other important factors leading to the decline in this area that is one of the least receptive to outside influence.

Elders from Pekha Village reported that they knew about alternative livelihoods assistance. They wanted to reduce their poppy production to benefit from the cash for work program like the rest of the province.

Until recently, the western part of Achin District remained without an alternative livelihoods project due to its high levels of poppy planting in 2004 and 2005 and their strong resistance to eradication. According to estimates, nearly 100% of farmers in Pekha planted poppy last year, making it a strong resistor to the province-wide reduction. However due to the governor's meeting with Shinwar tribal elders, some eradication last year, an effective Alternative Livelihoods Program, and the destruction of heroine labs there is a steep decline in poppy plantings this year.

In December 2005, the elders of Pekha Village expressed interest in cash for work assistance to build a flood wall protecting the village from the snow melt from the Spinghar Mountains every spring. The governor's promotional meeting with the Shinwar tribal elders resulted in a letter where villagers offered to cooperate with the alternative livelihoods project and promised to boycott or socially exclude anyone who plants poppy.

These actions indicated a commitment to eradicate poppy in their district. In light of this situation, the Alternative Livelihoods Program reversed its initial decision not to operate in western Achin.

The flood protection wall that is currently under construction in Pekha village will provide 11,203 days of employment for community members. The wall will be completed in time to protect the village from this year's spring snow melt. This cash for work project that grew out of villagers expressed interest in USAID's Alternative Livelihoods Program, will protect homes and a decrease in poppy production in Achin district.